

Letter urging Members of Congress to vote against the Conference Report on the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005

November 18, 2005

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing to urge you to vote against adoption of the Conference Report on H.R. 3199, the Patriot Act reauthorization bill. The bill fails to correct the flaws in the Patriot Act that threaten the privacy and civil liberties of all Americans.

The bill's changes to section 215 of the Patriot Act – the so-called library provision – provide no meaningful new protection. The government retains the power to engage in essentially unlimited fishing expeditions for records of innocent persons. The bill also does nothing to restrain the government's massive use of national security letters. In fact, the changes on national security letters affirmatively harm civil liberties by imposing unconstitutional criminal penalties for disclosure of receipt of a national security letter.

We agree with Senators Craig, Durbin, Feingold, Murkowski, Salazar and Sununu – three Republicans and three Democrats – that the Patriot Act reauthorization bill should embody the Senate's approach in requiring a connection between the records sought and a suspected terrorist or spy. Anything less unacceptably compromises the liberties and privacy of the American people.

American Booksellers Association
American Civil Liberties Union
American Conservative Union
American Library Association
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Association of American Physician and Surgeons
Association of American Publishers
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Center for American Progress
Center for Democracy and Technology
Center for National Security Studies
THE CITIZEN for Social Responsibility
Consumer Action
Doctors for Disaster Preparedness
Electronic Frontier Foundation
The Federation of American Scientists
First Amendment Foundation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Accountability Project
Gun Owners of America

Human Rights Watch
Liberty Coalition
The Multiracial Activist
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Muslim Lawyers
National Committee Against Repressive Legislation
National Lawyer's Guild--National Office
OMB Watch
OpenTheGovernment.org
People For the American Way
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
Privacy Times
The Rutherford Institute
Square One Media Network
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Fairfax County Privacy Council